

Repentance: What Does The Bible Teach?



By Dr. Curtis Hutson (1934-1995)

There is no doubt that all men from Adam on have had to repent in order to have a right relationship with God. The importance of repentance is demonstrated by the fact that men of every biblical age preached it.

John the Baptist preached it in **Mark 1:15** when he said, "**Repent ye, and believe the gospel.**"

Paul preached it in **Acts 20:21**, "**Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

The Apostle John proclaimed its necessity in **Revelation 2:5** when he exhorted the church at Ephesus, "**Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.**"

And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself emphasized its importance when He said in **Luke 13:3**, "**Except ye repent, ye shall all like-wise perish.**"

The problem is not preaching repentance; it is giving a wrong definition to the word. Down through the centuries "repent" has come to mean a far different thing than when it was spoken by John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle John, and Jesus Christ Himself. If you look up "repent or repentance" in a modern dictionary, you will find such definitions as "to feel sorry or self-reproachful," "to be conscience-stricken," "to turn from sin."

Using these definitions, some have preached reformation instead of repentance. If you look up the Greek word translated "repent" in the King James Bible and used by Jesus, Paul, John and others in the New Testament, you will find that the word *metanoeo* means to think differently or afterwards, that is, to change the mind.

In this message on repentance, I want to discuss three things. First, faulty ideas about repentance; second, facts about repentance; and finally, faith and

repentance.

First, let's look at some

Faulty Ideas About Repentance

We suppose there are many faulty ideas about repentance, but we will deal here with the more popular ones. Perhaps the most popular false idea is that repentance is turning from sin.

We have heard some well-known preachers say, "If you want to be saved, repent of your sins, turn from your sins." If turning from your sins means to stop sinning, then people can only be saved if they stop sinning. And it is unlikely that anyone has ever been saved, since we don't know anyone who has ever stopped sinning.

I recently asked a large congregation if there was anyone present who had not sinned in the last week to raise his hand, and not a single hand was lifted. I don't know of anyone who lives a single day without sinning. Now to be sure, you may not commit murder, adultery, or you may not rob a bank, but you sin nonetheless. **Romans 14:23** says, **"For whatsoever is not of faith is sin."** That simply means that if we do anything without a conviction of God's approval, then it is sinful. And I suppose everyone is guilty of this every day of his life.

James 4:17 says, **"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."**

When I was a small boy, I recall hearing an old preacher pray, "Lord, forgive us of the sins of omission as well as the sins of commission." There is such a thing as a sin of omission. The Bible says to leave undone something we know is good is a sin. And who hasn't sinned in this respect?

The book of I John is written to believers. And **I John 1:10** says, **"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."** The pronoun "we" in this verse refers to Christians, believers. For any believer to claim that he has not sinned is to make God a liar.

Several years ago I read a book by a professor at a fundamental university. Under the chapter on salvation, he said, "Quit your sinning, and God will give you a new heart." He presented repentance as turning from sin. I wrote this dear brother and expressed my concern, knowing that such teaching frustrates the unbeliever and makes him think that salvation is unattainable since he cannot live a sinless life. This professor wrote back that he had repented, that he had turned from his sins. When I wrote to ask if he had sinned after he was saved, he had to honestly answer the question and admit that he had. I explained that if he had sinned after he was saved, then he had not turned from his sins; he had only turned from part of them, that is, the ones he had not committed since he had been saved. He then agreed to change the statement in his book.

If repentance means turning from sin, and turning from sin means to stop sinning, then a person must live a sinless life in order to be saved. And if that is the case, then nobody could ever be saved, because there are no perfect people.

You don't get better to get saved; you get saved to get better. You can't get better until you do get saved. In reality, one can begin living better only after he is saved. When the individual trusts Christ as Saviour, he receives a new nature. **Second Peter 1:4** says, **"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature."** With this new nature come new desires and new power to make the desires a reality.

We read in **Philippians 2:13**, **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."** It is the presence of God in the believer that gives him both the desire and power to live a better life. And no man has the indwelling Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit until after he is saved.

The Christian life is not an imitation of the Christ life; it is Christ living His life over again in us as we yield ourselves to Him. That is what Paul meant in **Galatians 2:20**, **"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."**

Several years ago, after I finished preaching a Sunday morning service, several people trusted Christ as Saviour, including a lady and her five children. I noticed a man sitting on the same pew who did not respond. After the service, I spoke to him, while many of the members of the church were shaking hands with the lady, her children, and others who had trusted Christ that morning.

"Sir," I said, "is this your wife and children?"

"Yes," he replied.

I said, "Isn't it wonderful that they have trusted Christ as Saviour!"

"Yes," he replied.

Then I asked, "Have you trusted Christ as your Saviour?"

He dropped his head and said, "I'm afraid I haven't."

"May I ask why you haven't trusted Christ as Saviour?"

"Well," he said, "to be honest with you, I'm afraid I can't live it."

I suspected that this man had an idea that in order to be saved, he must promise God that he would never sin again, or he thought that repenting was turning from sin. So I pressed the issue. "What do you mean, you can't live it?"

"Well," he said, "I know that I will probably sin again."

I said, "Sir if getting saved is promising Jesus you will never sin again, then I would never get saved, because I know I cannot live a sinless life." I explained that to be saved one simply had to trust Jesus as Saviour. I opened the Bible to **John 3:36** and read, "**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.**" Then pointing to the verse, I asked, "Does the verse say 'He that believeth on the Son and lives it has everlasting life'?"

"Oh, no," he replied.

"Then what does the verse say?"

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

"Then must one believe on the Son and live it in order to be saved? Or must one simply believe on the Son, as the Bible says, to have everlasting life?"

"Well," he said, "I suppose that one must do what the Bible says - believe on the Son."

"Then will you trust Jesus Christ right now as your Saviour?"

With a smile on his face, he answered, "I certainly will." In a moment he joined his wife and children as the church members came by and shook hands, rejoicing with them in their decision to trust Christ as Saviour.

A few weeks later I received a call from a pastor a few miles out of Atlanta, Georgia. He said that a man, his wife, and five children had joined the church for baptism and told him that they were saved at Forrest Hills Baptist Church in Decatur Georgia. "Dr. Hutson," he said, "I thought you would like to know about it."

Of course I was happy to hear they had united with the church near where they lived. That family went on to become faithful workers in the church. They even bought their own bus and began a bus ministry, bringing scores of children and adults in to hear the Gospel.

I think there are many who would like to be saved but have been presented the faulty idea that repentance is turning from sin and therefore they are convinced that they cannot be saved. Oh, if we would only make salvation plain and explain to men that we are not saved by doing anything; rather we are saved by trusting in what Jesus has already done. He died two thousand years ago for our sins. He fully paid the sin debt, and the Bible says, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Now don't misunderstand me. We do not want to treat sin lightly, but then, we must not demand of an unbeliever that which is impossible for him to perform, and we must not make unbelievers feel that salvation is a hopeless, unattainable thing.

A second faulty idea is that repentance is sorrow for sin. The Bible says in **II Corinthians 7:10**, "**For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of....**" Though godly sorrow may bring about repentance, it is not the same as repentance.

I'm afraid we have been guilty of building doctrines off our experience rather than the Bible. We must remember that the Bible is the principle, not man's experience.

We have heard well-meaning preachers tell of their experience of salvation and describe their weeping and sorrow and how miserable and low-down they felt before they were saved. In doing so, they suggest to the unbeliever that he must feel a certain amount of sorrow before he can be saved. If that is the case, then how much sorrow must a man feel and exactly how much must he weep and moan before God will save him? This kind of teaching suggests to us the false idea that God is basically unwilling to save sinners, and unless one softens the heart of God by his tears, then God will never accept him and grant forgiveness for sin.

The truth is, God is more willing and ready to save than we unbelievers are to simply trust Him to do it. As a matter of fact, God has done and is doing all He can to save men. Two thousand years ago He placed all our sins on His Son Jesus Christ and then punished Jesus in our place to pay the sin debt we owe so that when we die, we won't have to pay it. That is exactly what the Bible means in **John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."** In the matter of salvation, no amount of weeping or sorrow will coax God into doing something that He has not already done.

Remember when Jesus was on the cross, He cried, **"It is finished!" (John 19:30)**, which means that the price for our salvation was paid in full. Nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken from it. We don't need to weep, beg, or plead for God to do something He has already done. What we do is accept Him, trust Him.

The problem is not that God is adamant and unapproachable but that man will not respond.

The great evangelist D. L. Moody insisted that the inquirer was not to seek sorrow but the Saviour. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross and His shed blood is sufficient for the forgiveness of sins. **Ephesians 1:7** says, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."**

Notice that forgiveness of sins is through His blood. It is not the death of Christ-plus sorrow; the death of Christ-plus tears; the death of Christ-plus mourning; or even the death of Christ-plus pleading. No, no, no! It is the death of Christ-period. The Word of God makes it clear that salvation is based entirely upon the death of Christ and the believer's faith or trust in Him. **Acts 16:31** plainly says, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** Believe. Not believe and weep, not believe and pray, not believe and mourn, not believe and feel sorrow for your sins, but believe, only believe."

I am glad when I see someone troubled over his sins, but we must be very careful in presenting the plan of salvation not to insist that a person have a certain degree of sorrow before he can be saved. That is not repentance, and such a requirement for salvation is not found in the Bible.

A third faulty idea about repentance is that it is reformation. Nearly all the religions of the world teach the idea that man must do something or be something in order to be saved. Some say you must join a particular church. If you don't belong to their particular group, then you cannot be saved. Others teach you must be baptized in water that the water actually washes away sin. Others teach you must be baptized in a certain way and by a certain preacher. Still others teach you must behave in a certain manner. They will often say, "If you don't straighten up, you are going to Hell!" Others teach that you must make certain resolutions or promises in order to be saved, and if you don't live up to those resolutions, then you are lost. If we could only understand the clear plan of salvation, it would surely help to clear up a lot of confusion.

Salvation is a gift and there is nothing we can do or be in order to earn it. All you can do with a gift is receive it. **John 1:12** says, **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."**

My beloved predecessor Dr. John R. Rice, used to say, "If you go to Hell, you pay your own way; but you go to Heaven on a free pass." He was certainly right. **Romans 6:23** says, **"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."** Salvation is a gift.

Reformation is good in its place, but when you make reformation repentance and a prerequisite for salvation, then it is wicked and evil. Salvation is of God, not of man. **John 1:13** says, **"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."** The expression, "not of blood," simply means that salvation is not inherited through the bloodline. No one is saved because his mother or father is a Christian. **"...nor of the will of the flesh"** means that there is nothing the flesh can do to earn salvation, including reformation. **"...nor of the will of man"** means there is nothing man can do to save himself. **"...but of God"** means that nothing of man enters into salvation.

If that be true, then man's behavior-good or bad-has nothing to do with obtaining salvation. **Titus 3:5** says, **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..."** **Ephesians 2:8, 9** tells us, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** It is impossible to mix grace and works. Salvation is either by grace or works; it cannot be a combination of the two.

Notice the words of **Romans 11:6**, **"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."**

Reformation as an instrument of salvation is absolutely futile, and repentance is not reformation. Reformation is an effort on the part of the individual to establish his own righteousness, and the Bible clearly teaches that we are not saved by our own righteousness but by the imputed righteousness of God. Look at **Romans 10:1-4**,

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

If we could reform and establish our own righteousness, that would not be sufficient. Says **Isaiah 64:6** regarding our righteousnesses, **"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...."** The best we can do is like filthy rags in the sight of a holy God. The only righteousness God accepts is His own, which is imputed to us the moment we trust Christ as Saviour.

What a blessed promise is **Romans 4:5**, **"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."**

*My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

Repentance is not reformation.

No one will ever go to Hell who has put his trust in Jesus Christ, but many will end up in torment who have trusted their own righteousness and reformation. **Matthew 7:22, 23** says:

"Many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The people referred to in these verses are trusting their own works, their own righteousness, for salvation, when they ought to be trusting Jesus Christ completely.

A fourth faulty idea about repentance is that it is penance. Dr. Harry Ironside said:

"Penance is not repentance. Penance is the effort in some way to atone for wrong done. This man can never do, nor does God, in His Word, lay it down as a condition for salvation that one first seek to make up to either God or his fellows for evil committed.... On the contrary, the call was to repent, but between repentance and doing penance there is a vast difference."

Penance is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church involving the confession of sin and submission to penalties imposed, followed by absolution by the priest.

There is a penalty for sin, but God has only one such penalty and that is death. **Ezekiel 18:4** reads, "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die.**" **Romans 6:23** says, "**The wages of sin is death!**" And **James 1:15** tells us, "**Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**"

God's penalty for sin is death, and this death is described in the Bible as the second death, the lake of fire - **Revelation 20:14** says, "**Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**" No amount of penance will pay for our sins.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ paid for our sins two thousand years ago. **First Peter 3:18** says, "**For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God....**" The word "once" here does not mean once upon a time but once for all. The payment for sin was made once for all two thousand years ago when Jesus died on the cross for our sins. The Bible states in **I Peter 2:24**, "**Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree....**" God imposed the penalty for our sins before Adam and Eve committed the first sin in the garden. In **Genesis 2:17** He said, "**....in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**" And the penalty imposed by God before the fall was paid in full by Jesus Christ on the cross two thousand years ago. All that's left for us to do is accept what Jesus has done and trust Him completely for salvation.

Oh, why must we complicate the matter and confuse unbelievers as to how to be saved! "What must I do to be saved?" asked the Philippian jailor in **Acts 16:30**, and Paul replied in **verse 31**, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.**"

Repentance is not penance.

Facts About Repentance

There is a vast difference between what men think the Bible says about repentance and what the Bible actually says. Here are a few facts about "repent" as it is found in its various forms in both the Old and New Testaments.

The word "repent" is found forty-five times in the King James Bible; "repentance" twenty-six times; "repented" thirty-two times; "repentest" one time; "repenteth" five times; "repenting" one time; and "repentings" one time - a total of 111 times in both the Old and New Testaments. The word in its various forms is found forty-six times in the Old Testament and sixty-five in the New. Of the forty-six times the word appears in the Old Testament, twenty-eight times God does the repenting, not man.

For instance, in **Exodus 32:14** the Bible says, "**And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.**"

In addition to the twenty-eight times that God repents in the Old Testament, there are nine other passages that tell of things about which God does not or did not repent. Of the forty-six times a form of the word "repentance" appears in the Old Testament, only nine times is man doing the repenting. Thirty-seven

times it has reference to God's repenting or telling us of things about which God did not or will not repent.

Now, if "repent" means to turn from sin, we have a problem. We have God turning from sin, and that is certainly inconsistent with Bible teaching. God is sinless and has no sin to turn from. But if "repentance" means a change of mind, then it is consistent. You have God changing His mind about some things, but you have at least nine things in the Old Testament about which God says He will not change His mind.

Now that makes sense. There are many things about which I would change my mind, but there are some things about which I will not change my mind. For instance, I will not "repent" or change my mind about the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. I will not "repent" or change my mind about the fact that Jesus is the virgin-born Son of God. I will not change my mind about the fact that salvation is by grace through faith. And there are other important matters about which I will not "repent" or change my mind.

On the other hand, there are some things about which I would "repent" or change my mind. I may plan a certain activity next week, but before the time arrives, I may change my mind and decide to do something else. As a matter of fact, my wife says I change my mind often; and she is probably right. I have said that I have a clean mind; I change it often. But there are some things about which I will not change my mind.

Now if I can change my mind about some things and not about others, then God can certainly do the same.

Sometimes in the Old Testament the word carries with it the idea of feeling sorry or regretful. Sometimes where the word is used, one is said to repent from what is wrong toward what is right. Other times it speaks of repenting from what is right toward that which is wrong. It is sometimes used in connection with sin, but the Word itself does not mean turning from sin; it means a change of mind. Another time "repentance" in the Old Testament is related to one's going back on his word. **Numbers 23:19** says, **"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"**

We mentioned earlier that "repentance" in its various forms is found sixty-five times in the New Testament. Fifty-eight of those times it is translated from the Greek words *metanoia* and *metanoeo*. According to a Greek dictionary of New Testament words, *metanoia* is the noun of *metanoeo*, and both words mean identically the same thing. The basic definition of the two words is "to change one's mind." The definition from the *Strong's Concordance* of *metanoeo* is, "to think differently, or afterwards, that is, reconsider."

It is these two Greek words that are always used to relate to salvation. No other Greek word translated "repent" or "repentance" is used in relation to salvation. The problem and confusion is not preaching repentance but attaching the wrong definition to the word. For instance, to say that repentance means to turn from sin, or to say that repentance is a change of mind that

leads to a change of action, is to give a wrong definition to the word. And to teach that man must turn from his sins to be saved, or change his actions to be saved, is in contradiction to the clear teaching of the Word of God that one is saved by grace through faith.

Though we often hear the expression, "Repent of your sins," it is not found in the Bible. What the repentance or change of mind is about is always determined by the context.

For instance, in **Acts 17:30** we read, **"And the times of this ignorance God winked at [overlooked]; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."** What they were to repent or change their mind about is clear from **verse 29**. Here the Scripture says, **"...we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device!"** They needed to change their mind about God and see that He is not a graven image made of gold, silver, or stone but that He is a living God and is going to be their judge. **Verse 31**, **"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."**

In **Luke 13:5** Jesus said, **"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."** The context of this verse shows that they needed to repent or change their mind regarding punishment and sin. In this passage, Christ was talking to good people who believed that people suffered only because of their sins, and they concluded that those in Galilee whose blood Pilate mingled with sacrifices and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were greater sinners because they died such horrible deaths. Jesus contradicts the thinking of these self-righteous people and tells them that they need to repent or change their mind and see themselves as sinners, too, or they will perish in their own self-righteousness.

One does not have to know the Greek language to see that "repent" in this passage does not mean feeling sorry for or turning from sin.

Finally, let me say a word about...

Faith and Repentance

Not long ago I preached a simple sermon on salvation and invited sinners to trust Christ as Saviour. Over one hundred precious people trusted Christ in that particular Sunday morning service.

After the service, a well-meaning Christian said to me, "I enjoyed your sermon, but you didn't say anything about repentance. You should have told those people they needed to repent." He seemed to think that my telling those people to trust Christ as Saviour was not sufficient.

And he is not alone in his thinking. Unless you use the word "repent" in presenting the plan of salvation, some preachers foolishly accuse you of preaching "easy believism." Somehow they have gotten the idea that just to

preach, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is not sufficient.

In an article in THE SWORD OF THE LORD, Dr. John R. Rice said:

"Sometimes the preacher does not himself fully understand the plan of salvation. He thinks of salvation as a process. First, there is a period of conviction, then a period of repentance, then an act of faith."

He went on to explain that when one trusts Christ as Saviour he also repents.

Dr. Rice is absolutely right. Faith and repentance are the same; they are not two separate decisions. One cannot trust Christ as Saviour without repenting or changing his mind. The very fact that he trusts Christ for salvation shows that he has changed his mind regarding sin, salvation, and God.

If one book of the Bible had to be considered "the salvation book," it would have to be the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is printed and distributed more than any other book of the Bible. The purpose of this book is given in **John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."**

According to this verse, the whole purpose of the Gospel of John is that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ and believing they might have life through His name. In other words, it is written that men might be saved. Yet "repent" or "repentance" is not used one single time in the Gospel of John. On the other hand, "believe" is used more than ninety times in the twenty-one chapters.

The book of Romans was written to show how men are justified. After explaining in Romans, chapter 4, how men are not justified, **Romans 5:1** states, **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** "Repentance" is found only two times in the book of Romans and in only one case does it have reference to salvation.

Romans 11:29 says, **"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."** If you make "repentance" here mean turning from sin, it would cause the verse to read, "For the gifts and calling of God are without turning from sin," which doesn't make sense at all. The verse means that the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable, that when God calls a man to preach, He never changes His mind about it.

While "repentance" is found only twice in the book of Romans, "faith" is found thirty-nine times. **Romans 3:28** states, **"a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."** And **Romans 5:1** says, **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God...."**

Since the word "repent" is not found at all in the Gospel of John, and "repentance" is found only twice in the book of Romans, and only one time is it used in connection with salvation, are we then to conclude that repentance is not necessary to salvation? Absolutely not! We have already shown the

importance of repentance and its necessity. Now, since repentance is not found in connection with salvation in the Gospel of John and only once in the book of Romans, are we to conclude that neither of these two books tells one how to be saved or justified? Certainly not. Those who know the Bible best would have to agree that these two books of the Bible contain the clearest presentation of the Gospel and how one is to be saved.

Since repentance is necessary to salvation, and since the word is not used at all in the Gospel of John and only once as referring to salvation in the book of Romans, then we must conclude that the word "repentance" is included in the words "believe" and "faith" which are found repeatedly in these two books.

John, chapter 3, contains the heart of the Gospel. It is here we find that wonderful verse, **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."** That verse is used in the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in this chapter. Jesus says to Nicodemus, **"Ye must be born again" (vs. 7)**. In **verse 9**, Nicodemus asks, **"How can these things be?"** And Jesus gave the answer in **verses 14 through 16**, **"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

Nowhere in this chapter does Jesus use the word "repent." He only tells Nicodemus to believe in Him. In **verse 18** He said, **"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."** And He closes the conversation in **verse 36** by saying, **"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."**

"Believe" in these verses means to trust, to depend on, to rely on. Nothing could be plainer. All one has to do to have everlasting life is trust Jesus Christ. Jesus has already died for the sinner and all we need do is depend on Him for salvation. But He warns in **verse 36**, **"He that believeth not the Son [does not depend on the Son] shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."**

There is no promise in the Bible to those who partially believe on Christ. The promise is to those who believe on Him. We cannot trust Jesus 90% and something else 10%; we must fully trust Him, Him alone and nothing else, for salvation.

Since Jesus did not use the word "repent" in telling Nicodemus how to be born again, then we must reach one of three conclusions. First, repentance is not necessary to salvation; second, repentance is necessary for salvation and Jesus didn't tell Nicodemus how to be saved; third, repentance is necessary to salvation and is included in the word "believe" which Jesus did use time and time again in this chapter. The correct conclusion, of course, is that repentance

is necessary to salvation and is included in "believe." A man cannot trust Christ without repenting.

END OF ARTICLE



What Must I Do To Be Saved? (by Dr. John R. Rice)

"Faith is the only righteous thing that I can do!"

—Pastor Jack Hyles, a quote from the MP3 sermon titled: "[God's Reversal Of Psalm 51](#)"

"Dear sinner, do not make this a difficult matter. There is one simple step between you and Jesus. When you trust Him, everything else is settled, and you have repented, you have come to Christ, you have received Him, you have done everything necessary to be saved." —Evangelist John R. Rice (1895-1980), a helpful quote from his tract titled: "[What Must I Do To Be Saved?](#)"

“If you do not put a difference between justification wrought by the man Christ without and sanctification wrought by the Spirit of Christ within, you are not able to divide the Word aright; but contrariwise, you corrupt the Word of God, and cast stumbling blocks before the people.” —Evangelist John Bunyan (1628-1688)



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